

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
STAFF REPORT

PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

DATE OF HEARING: April 17, 2008

ZMOD 2007-0007 – Life Time Fitness Sign Plan

DECISION DEADLINE: Extended to June 3, 2008

ELECTION DISTRICT: Dulles

PROJECT PLANNER: Stephen Gardner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Life Time Fitness, Inc. of Eden Prairie, MN has submitted an application for a special exception to modify the applicable provisions of Section 5-1204 of the 1993 Zoning Ordinance to implement a Comprehensive Sign Package that proposes changes to the permitted number and size of signs. The property is being developed by-right in the PD-IP (Planned Development – Industrial Park) zoning district. The property is also located within the AI (Airport Impact) Overlay District, partially within the Ldn 65 or higher aircraft noise contour and partially between the Ldn 60-65 aircraft noise contours. A small portion of the property is also located within the FOD (Floodplain Overlay District). The modification to the sign regulations applicable to an approved development plan is authorized by special exception under Section 6-1511(B)(5) and is reviewed in accordance with Section 5-1202(E). The subject property is approximately 15.6 acres in size and is located on the north side of Prentice Drive, 0.3 mile west of Randolph Drive, in the Broad Run Business Center at 44610 Prentice Drive, Sterling, Virginia, in the Dulles Election District. The property is governed by the policies of the Revised General Plan (Suburban Policy Area) and the Revised Countywide Transportation Plan which designate this area for Keynote Employment use and which recommend floor area ratios up to 0.4 FAR.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is unable to support approval of this application which proposes over ten times the aggregate sign area allowed by the Ordinance for an individual business. Outstanding issues include both the number of signs and the aggregate sign area. Staff recommends the building mounted sign on the northern façade and the monument sign at the entrance to the internal parking area be eliminated. Staff recommends the application be referred to the Committee of the Whole for additional discussion.

SUGGESTED MOTIONS

1. I move that the Planning Commission forward ZMOD 2007-0007, Life Time Fitness Sign Plan, to a Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion.

OR,

2. I move an alternate motion.

VICINITY MAP



Directions:

From Leesburg, take Route 7 east to Route 28. Follow Route 28 south to Waxpool Road. Follow Waxpool Road west to Broderick Drive. Turn left onto Broderick Drive. Follow Broderick Drive to Prentice Drive. Turn right onto Prentice Drive. The Life Time Fitness Building is currently under construction on the right and is accessible via a private drive.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Application Information	4
II.	Summary of Discussion.....	5
III.	Conclusions	5
IV.	Conditions of Approval.....	5
V.	Project Review	6
A.	Context	6
B.	Summary of Outstanding Issues.....	7
C.	Overall Analysis	7
D.	Zoning Ordinance Criteria for Approval	9
VI.	Attachments.....	9

I. APPLICATION INFORMATION

APPLICANT

Life Time Fitness, Inc.
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Eden Prince, MN 55344
952-229-7596

REPRESENTATIVE

Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh, P.C.
Attn: William J. Keefe, AICP
One East Market Street, 3rd Floor
Leesburg, VA 21076
703-737-3633

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

A Zoning Modification for a Comprehensive Sign Plan

LOCATION

North of Prentice Drive (Route 1071), west of the intersection of Prentice and Broderick Drive (Route 1070) and south of Waxpool Road (Route 625).

TAX MAP/PARCEL #s

/80//33/////1/

MCPI: 062-29-0569

ZONING

PD-IP (1993 Zoning Ordinance)

ACREAGE OF SITE

15.6 acres

SURROUNDING ZONING / LAND USES

	ZONING	PRESENT LAND USES
North	PD-IP	Vacant
South	PD-G1	Flex Industrial
East	PD-IP	Vacant
West	PD-OP	Vacant

II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Topic	Issues Reviewed and Status
Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conformance with <u>Revised General Plan</u>. Status: Unresolved; signage proposed on the building's northern façade is not consistent with Keynote Employment policies emphasizing high quality design.• Information regarding lighting and a condition of approval limiting glare and light trespass. Status: Resolved; condition added accordingly.• Commitment to landscaping around the base of monument signs consisting of flowering plants and low-lying shrubbery. Status: Resolved; condition added accordingly.
Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of the property line in relation to the monument signs to ensure signage is located on-site. Status: Resolved; illustrative has been submitted depicting property lines.• Total aggregate sign area is over ten times that allowed by the Ordinance for a single tenant; total sign area seems excessive. Status: Unresolved.• Elimination of a second monument sign at the entrance to the internal parking area. Status: Unresolved; the second monument sign is not needed for identification or directional purposes.• Building mounted signage on each façade seems excessive, notably the northern façade which overlooks a golf course. Status: Unresolved.• Revise the Statement of Justification to reference subdivision of the property. Status: Resolved.• Revise references to note the property is subject to the <u>1993 Zoning Ordinance</u>. Status: Resolved.

III. CONCLUSIONS

1. The application proposes signage on the northern façade of the building which would be in excess of that envisioned by the design policies of the Revised General Plan for areas designated as Keynote Employment.
2. The sign modification establishes standards for the location, size, number, illumination, and color of proposed signage for the Life Time Fitness Center.
3. The application proposes over ten times the amount signage allowed by the 1993 Zoning Ordinance for an individual business.

IV. CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL – April 17, 2008

Staff recommends the following conditions of approval:

1. Signs shall be provided in substantial conformance with the "Life Time Fitness, Inc. Comprehensive Sign Package," dated March 20, 2008.

2. Sign materials, colors, size, height, location, number, and lighting shall be provided in substantial conformance with the "Life Time Fitness, Inc. Comprehensive Sign Package," dated March 20, 2008.
3. Landscaping shall extend around the base of each monument sign a minimum of three feet (3') and shall consist of low-lying shrubbery and/or flowering plants. The use of native species shall be encouraged. All landscaping shall be maintained in good condition.
4. No animation, neon, or moving lights shall be permitted. Signs shall be illuminated internally only and shall contain no exposed lighting elements. No sign illumination shall spill upward or reflect or cast glare onto adjacent properties or roadways.
5. Individual signs shall be maintained in good condition.

V. PROJECT REVIEW

A. CONTEXT

Life Time Fitness, Inc., authorized applicant, has submitted an application for Zoning Ordinance Modification (ZMOD) to implement a Comprehensive Sign Package, modifying the permitted number and size of signage. The Comprehensive Sign Plan applies to the Life Time Fitness Center, a health and fitness center currently under construction in the Broad Run Business Center. The site is accessible via Prentice Drive northeast of the intersection with Lockridge Road.

The Life Time Fitness Center is being constructed by-right within the PD-IP (Planned Development – Industrial Park) zoning district. The 15.6 acre site was subdivided (SBPR 2006-0014) from a 136.6 acre parent tract in July 2007, and a site development plan (STPL 2007-0018) was approved in November 2007 detailing an 111,000 square foot facility.

The sign plan proposes a total of six (6) signs, four (4) building mounted signs and two (2) monument signs, encompassing an aggregate sign area of 674 square feet. The two monument signs will each occupy seventy-two (72) square feet and will be

located at the entrance to the property along Prentice Drive and at the entrance to the parking area. A building mounted sign will be located on each façade of the building. Building mounted signage on the east, west, and northern facades will each occupy 120 square feet; signage on the southern façade, the entrance to the building, will be larger, occupying 170 square feet.



B. SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES

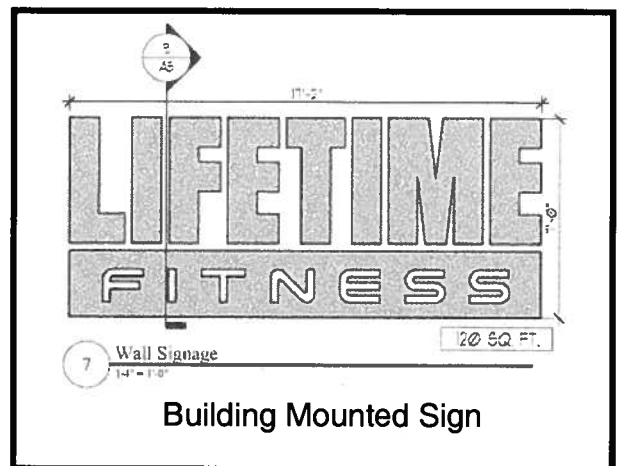
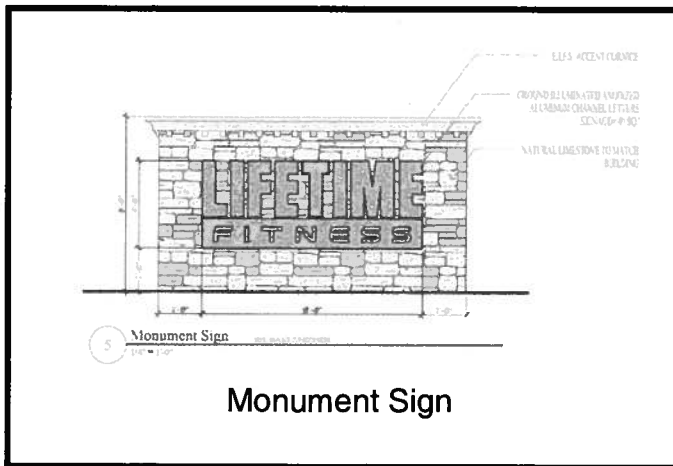
Outstanding issues include both the number of signs and the aggregate sign area. Staff recommends eliminating the building mounted sign on the northern façade and the monument sign at the entrance to the internal parking area. Further discussion regarding the need for building signage on the east and west façade is warranted.

C. OVERALL ANALYSIS

ZONING

The application is governed by the 1993 Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance (“Ordinance”). The property is currently zoned PD-IP (Planned Development – Industrial Park), and the Life Time Fitness Center, defined by Section 4-503(T) as “health and fitness center,” is being developed by-right.

The application is proposing a total of six (6) signs, two (2) monument signs and four (4) building mounted signs. Monument signs, seventy-two (72) square feet each, will be located at the entrance near the intersection of Prentice Drive and near the entrance to the internal parking lot. Building mounted signs will be placed on each façade of the building. Signage on the east, west, and northern facades will each occupy 120 square feet; signage on the southern façade, the entrance to the building, will be larger, occupying 170 square feet. Combined, the Life Time Fitness Comprehensive Sign Plan proposes a total aggregate sign area of 674 square feet.



All of the signs proposed for modification are defined by the Ordinance as Business Signs. As defined, a Business Sign is one “which directs attention to a business or profession conducted, or to a commodity or service sold, offered or manufactured, or to an entertainment offered on the premises where the sign is located.” The Ordinance specifies the maximum area of any one Business Sign shall not exceed twenty (20) square feet; the maximum aggregate sign area shall not exceed sixty (60) square feet. The proposed 674 square feet of signage would constitute over ten times the signage allowed by the Ordinance for a single tenant.

Monument Signs

The Life Time Fitness Center is located at the end of an internal entrance drive, flanked by undeveloped parcels on either side. The Applicant states two monument signs will be needed to identify the internal parking area when the vacant parcels are developed. Staff notes, however, the length of the entrance lane from Prentice Drive to the parking area is approximately 0.10 of a mile; three signs are proposed along the approach to the building, two monument signs and a larger, building mounted sign. Though a monument sign at the entrance to the property is justified, a second monument sign at the entrance to the parking area is not needed for identification or directional purposes as the larger building mounted sign will serve this function.

Building Mounted Signs

Regarding the building mounted signs, the Applicant states as justification that signage is needed to “appropriately complement the dimensions of the Life Time Fitness Center, which at approximately 110,000 square feet, represents a large building that will require appropriately sized signage.” The Applicant further states that without signage, “viewing a monotonous structure from each side would give the impression that the building is a faceless warehouse that would serve as a visual detriment to the adjacent golf course and parcels beyond.” Staff concurs that a building of such mass and scale should include breaks in the façade but questions whether the use of illuminated signage is the most appropriate means to do so. Signage should be intended to aid the motoring public in identification and should be sited in such a way as to provide visibility from existing or planned roadways. If the intent is to provide visual relief, architectural features should be used, not signage.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The site is governed under the policies of the Revised General Plan (Plan). The site is located in the Dulles Community of the Suburban Policy Area and is planned for Keynote Employment land uses according to the Planned Land Use Map (Revised General Plan, p. 7-23).

Areas designated as suitable for Keynote Employment are intended to be “100-percent premier office or research-and-development centers” (Revised General Plan, Text, p. 6-27) and should exhibit the highest quality in site and building design, incorporating high-quality architectural features, heavily landscaped greens, and tree-lined boulevards. Buildings should remain the predominate feature, and signage should be less obtrusive, complimenting the structure.

In the initial assessment, the Community Planning first referral noted the proposed signs were “proportionate to the buildings design and maintain the high quality image of Keynote Employment.” However, in response to a request from Zoning Administration to clarify the sign comparison matrix, it became apparent that only one section of the ordinance is proposed for modification, resulting in an aggregate sign area that is over ten times the signage allowed for a single tenant. Upon further review, Community Planning concluded the amount of signage requested seems excessive compared to the standards allowed by the Ordinance, and such an excess would not be consistent with the high quality design envisioned by the Plan for areas designated as Keynote Employment. Consequently,

Community Planning recommends the building mounted sign on the northern façade, the rear of the building, be eliminated.

D. ZONING ORDINANCE CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

Section 6-1310 states "... (i)in considering a special exception application, the following factors shall be given reasonable consideration, to the extent applicable, in addition to any other standards imposed by this Ordinance ..."

Standard *The glare or light that may be generated by the proposed use in relation to uses in the immediate area.*

Analysis The Life Time Fitness Sign Plan requires lighting that is internally illuminated and will contain no exposed lighting elements.

Standard *The proposed location, lighting, and types of signs in relation to the proposed use, uses in the area, and the sign requirements of this Ordinance.*

Analysis The proposal provides a comprehensive sign plan for the Life Time Fitness Center.

Standard *Whether the proposed special exception at the specified location will contribute to or promote the welfare and convenience of the public.*

Analysis The proposed signs will help guide the motoring public to the Life Time Fitness Center.

VI. ATTACHMENTS		PAGE NUMBER
1. Review Agency Comments		
a. Planning Department, Community Planning	9/19/08; 2/21/08	A-1, A-4
b. Building and Development, Zoning Administration	12/4/07; 2/22/08	A-6, A-8
2. Disclosure of Real Parties in Interest		A-10
3. Applicant's Response to Referral Agency Comments	1/29/08; 3/20/08	A-18, A-26
4. Statement of Justification		A-32
5. Life Time Fitness Sign Plan Package		A-39

NOTE: Attachments may be viewed electronically, at the Planning Department Front Counter, or in the Building & Development File Room.